

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 20th November 2015.

Room G3 & G4, Ground Floor, Addenbrooke House

Status: Draft

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn (SB) Chairperson	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained Primary - South Cluster
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primary - Small Schools
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primary – Newport Cluster
Mark Gibbons (MG)	Windmill Primary	Maintained Primary - Central Cluster
Becca Butler (BB)	Queenswood Primary	Maintained Primary - Wellington Cluster
Claire Lamb (CL)	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primary – North Cluster
Malcolm Boulter (MB)	HLC Primary	Maintained Primary – Governors
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Technology College	Maintained Secondary Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls' High	Academies
Lee Hadley (LH)	Abraham Darby Academy	Academies
Paul Roberts (PR)	HLC Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Maintained Special Schools
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Day Nurseries	PVI & Childminders
Jim Collins (JC)	Assistant Director, Education & Corporate Parenting	LA Observer
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer
Andy Wood (AW)	Schools' Funding Accountant	LA Observer

1. Apologies – AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Paul Watling – Cllr Telford & Wrekin Council,
Louise Lowing – Madeley Nursery,
Jessie Gupta – Captain Webb Primary,
Rachel Brown – Maintained PRUs,
Adrian Beckett - TCAT.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising – JC.

2.1 The minutes of the 18th September 2015 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3593/september_2015_-_minutes

2.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered in the agenda for this meeting.

3. Update on 2016/17 Schools Funding Formula and High Needs Proposals – JC/TD.

3.1 TD advised the Forum that the formula and the proposal to move funding from the schools block to the high needs block had been approved by the cabinet. The only real change to the formula was the tightening of the criteria for the split site allocations.

3.2 The LA has continued to refine the high needs proposals and there are some changes to provision / funding that have come about, in particular:

- the possibility of combining the existing provision at the Den (based at Haughton) with the proposed additional Primary EBD provision;

- Telford Park have agreed to a proposal to move the 8 High Needs Unit places at the school from September 2016 – this proposal has thus been submitted to the Education Funding Agency (EFA);

- Pupil numbers at the Bridge continue to increase.

3.3 In this context, and having reflected on feed back from the Forum and clusters, the LA is going to review the high needs proposals and would like to form a sub-group of the Forum to be involved in and inform this process. JC asked for volunteers for this group, which should include maintained primary, maintained secondary, academies special school and PRU representatives. The following Forum members volunteered to be part of this group:

Lee Hadley	Abraham Darby Academy
Mark Gibbons	Windmill Primary
Claire Lamb	Redhill Primary
Heather Davies	The Bridge
Paul Roberts	HLC Secondary

It was also agreed to approach Rachel Brown (The Linden Centre) to join the group.

3.3 CC asked if the Newport cluster's letter had been seen and taken into account. JC confirmed that this was the case and that whilst the decision to move the funds to the high needs block had been agreed the use of the funds was still to be determined and may be used to support provision in mainstream schools. This will be informed by the Forum sub-group discussions.

3.4 TD reminded the group of the difference in the methodology which determined the funding blocks; schools and high needs. Whilst pupil numbers are growing the schools block increases by £4K+ per pupil. The increase in pupils causes increased pressures in the high needs block but the DfE have advised LAs to assume that high needs block funding in 2016/17 will remain at the level of 2015/16.

3.5 JC informed the Forum that we are awaiting the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) later this month, which will inform the LA of the level of efficiency savings that will be required and how the delivery of services will be affected.

3.6 PR asked if the LA could bid for additional high needs funding from the DfE? TD stated that there was no bidding process for 2016/17. For 2015/16 the DfE had applied a presumption that no bids would be considered unless pupil numbers in high needs institutions/units were significantly above place numbers, which at the time, was not the case in T&W.

4. Central top slices – central expenditure financed by Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – TD.

4.1 TD described the difference between top slices from DSG and de-delegation and reminded the Forum who is entitled to vote on each issue. TD also reiterated the pressure on LA budgets including in particular a reduction in the Education Support Grant of £0.5M in FY1516.

4.2 The Forum were presented with a paper which can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3683/november_2015_-_fy1617_dsg_top_slices

Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account (CERA).

4.3 CERA is made up of two elements, the first of which is to support the costs of Building Schools for the Future (BSF). The LA is requesting a top slice of £100K which is £242K less than last year. There is now only one project still ongoing, Charlton School, but defect liability periods extend beyond the opening of schools, and experience of projects completed to date is that they can be extensive and continue for considerable periods of time.

4.4 JC stated that Abraham Darby has been open some years now and there are still snagging issue.

4.5 CL stated that she thought that the allocation last year for BSF was the last request and would not be requested this year. TD assured CL that this was to be the last request and it was stated last year [N.B. Minute 6.5 of the Forum meeting dated 26 September 2014 refers] that we would limit the request this year to £100K.

4.6 The second element of CERA is to support the central expenditure on repair and maintenance and asset management. These functions have historically been jointly funded from a Central top slice, LA funds and schools' individual budgets. The request for top slice for this element is £252K.

4.7 The Forum voted on the top slice of £352K for CERA twelve in favour and none against – Carried.

Falling Rolls.

4.8 As agreed at the previous meeting the LA has brought this proposal back to the Forum now that it can be informed by draft data from the October 2015 census.

- 4.9 Based on this data and existing Ofsted ratings, only two schools will meet the requirements for funding. The amount requested has therefore reduced from the £450K budget in FY1516 to £75K for FY1617.
- 4.10 PR asked if academies were funded differently and received funding for falling rolls directly from DfE and would this be double funding for them. TD stated that academies are eligible for this funding and to our knowledge are not allocated falling rolls funding separately by the EFA.
- 4.11 The Forum voted on the top slice of £75K for falling rolls twelve in favour with none against – Carried.

Admissions.

- 4.12 Kathy Swallow (KS) joined the meeting and described the work of the admissions team. KS informed the Forum of the extra pressures from the increased size of the relevant cohorts especially the reception cohort. There is also considerable work arising from the increased numbers of moves between schools at the request of parents.
- 4.13 The team has also had to absorb inflationary pressures within the allocation and as places within the primary phase have filled the number of appeals for places has increased significantly. If the funding is cut or refused then the quality and efficiency of the service would undoubtedly be compromised to some extent.
- 4.14 JC stated that there is also additional demand on staff time from responding to parents who are not satisfied with the results of the appeals process.
- 4.15 TD stated that benchmarking does show that we are more expensive than the average but this may be due to our LA being smaller and having higher than average mobility.
- 4.16 The Forum voted on the top slice of £392K for admissions twelve in favour and nil against – Carried.

Pupil Growth.

- 4.17 TD reminded the Forum that the top slice for FY1516 was a capped fund of £115K for pupil growth. The group were advised of the potential allocations on the paper distributed for agenda item six below.
- 4.18 TD referred the group back to a question that was asked at the last meeting which was “do we need a fund at all?”
- 4.19 CL stated that the North cluster thought that the fund was unsustainable and that only new schools should receive allocations for growth.
- 4.20 TD asked then if we should only fund exceptional circumstances?

- 4.21 PR asked what would constitute an exceptional circumstance?
- 4.22 CL said she thought that the fund should only be for unplanned growth and schools that were growing rapidly.
- 4.23 TD asked if there was a case for looking at allocations on a case by case basis with final allocations being approved by the Forum.
- 4.24 SB stated that she would be in favour of this as each case would be different and should be considered individually.
- 4.25 RG pointed out that schools will receive the funding due from growth but on a lagged basis. Schools could borrow funds if necessary until funding catches up. TD pointed out that for maintained schools this would be the case but that for schools that did not bank with the LA, such as academies, this may cause cash flow issues.
- 4.26 SB commented that the current formula does not allow for ensuring that monies allocated are justified.
- 4.27 MG asked if the top slice could be held rather than allocated in total by a formula and any underspend carried forward? TD responded that the formula could be run and then any allocation could come to the Forum for approval. MG then pointed out that if schools know how much they would be allocated they would be able to make a case for the allocation similar to the balance control mechanism currently in place.
- 4.28 JC felt in light of the discussion that had taken place the proposal needed to be amended slightly.
- 4.29 TD stated that we need to know the amount that will be top sliced before the scheduled January meeting so that the authority planning tool (APT) can be submitted to the DfE.
- 4.30 The Forum voted that there should be a top slice of £100K, distribution method to be confirmed at a later date, twelve in favour with none against.

Key Stage One (KS1) contingency fund.

- 4.31 TD reminded the Forum that the top slice for FY1516 was an uncapped fund of £50K for KS1 contingency trip. The group were advised of the actual (Summer and Autumn terms) and potential (Spring Term) allocations as shown on the paper distributed for agenda item six below.
- 4.32 The methodology of allocation was explained. This has been changed with effect from the Autumn Term, as agreed at the last Forum meeting, to exclude schools that have exceeded the last multiple of 30 because of admissions that are exempt of the maximum class size rules, such

as appeals and admission of twins etc. The purpose of this change is to allocate funds only when the additional pupil(s) above a multiple of 30 requires the creation of an additional class.

- 4.33 CL asked if the growth funding allocations could be double counted in the KS1 allocations? AW stated it is possible that a school could receive a payment from both funds, albeit each fund only partly covers the potential costs associated with the changes in circumstances. For any future allocations we will examine the combined impact of the two criteria for additional payments.
- 4.34 JC asked if we need this fund at all? CL stated that the North cluster is of the opinion that we do not.
- 4.35 CC stated that the amounts allocated would have a very limited impact and would not cover the costs of a school that genuinely needed an extra class with a teacher and teaching assistant.
- 4.36 SB commented that if the growth fund criteria are formulated in such a way, schools that felt that they needed additional support to meet the class size pledge in KS1 funding could request support from that fund.
- 4.37 The Forum voted unanimously against having a top slice for KS1 for FY1617.

Safeguarding.

- 4.38 The amount top sliced for the last three years has been £25K for safeguarding. JC was of the opinion that this was not enough but under current regulations we are prohibited from increasing the amount we top slice.
- 4.39 TD stated that the regulations provide a mechanism to request that the amount is increased by applying to the SofS. We could pursue this for FY1718 if the Forum supported this.
- 4.40 JC recommended that the top slice continue at £25K for the FY1617 but asked if the option to ask the SofS to increase the amount could be investigated.
- 4.41 MG pointed out that schools need to book training well in advance and that he would prefer to have the funds in his budget and commission services when it suits the school.
- 4.42 CC was of the opinion that due to the training completed that the demand on the service would reduce. Having said that £25K is not excessive for the service provided.
- 4.43 HD stated that the courses pick up on the changes to thinking and legislation in the area and that she would not like to take this on herself for The Bridge.
- 4.44 The Forum voted on the proposal to top slice £25K for safeguarding twelve in favour and nil against.

Forum Support.

- 4.45 TD pointed out that this helps to fund support for the Forum, in part provided by himself and his team so had a direct interest in this item..
- 4.46 The Forum voted on the proposal to top slice £17K for Forum support twelve in favour and nil against.

5. De-Delegation – TD.

- 5.1 TD reminded the Forum of the difference between a top slice and de-delegation and who has the right to vote. The group were reminded that for the FY1516 the primary phase voted in favour of all requested de-delegations and that the secondary phase decided not to vote in favour of any de-delegation as only a minority of the phase are now maintained schools.
- 5.2 A paper was prepared for de-delegation, and an estimate of the likely costs to schools, and can be found at the following links:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3684/november_2015_-_fy1617_schools_block_-_de-delegation

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3685/november_2015_-_de-delegation_estimated_deductions

- 5.3 TD pointed out that as mentioned at the earlier meeting, and in the high needs paper, schools would not be asked to de-delegate for behaviour support and this funding would therefore remain in schools' budgets.

Support for Ethnic Minority Pupils.

- 5.4 Qamar Maqsood (QM) and Ginny Sales (GS) attended the meeting and presented a paper, and the case for de-delegation, by advising the Forum of the work completed so far this FY and projected work for the remaining months. The presentation can be found at the following link:

Insert a link here when ICT approved.

- 5.5 JC advised the Forum that pressures on the service were likely to increase with the increase in the number of asylum seekers and families from Syria in particular.
- 5.6 CL stated that the North cluster view was that the monies should be in the schools' budget and they should have control over what they purchase from the service.
- 5.7 MG stated that the Central cluster view was the same as the North cluster and that the service should be able to make a surplus on a fully traded basis.

- 5.8 SB raised the point that the de-delegation only applied to those schools that received monies for EAL pupils within the formula.
- 5.9 GS stated that de-delegation allowed the service to be more flexible. CL disagreed as she thought that being able to buy what each school required is more flexible.
- 5.10 The Forum members then voted zero in favour and seven against de-delegation for Support for Ethnic Minority de-delegation.
- 5.11 JC and some of the primary school representatives stated that they were keen to work with the service to ensure that the service was not lost and would continue sustainably.

Free School Meal (FSM) Assessment.

- 5.12 TD pointed out that the options here were to de-delegate, to have individual SLAs with schools, or for schools to complete the assessments themselves; which may not be cost effective.
- 5.13 The primary school representatives voted for de-delegation for FSM assessment seven in favour with none against.

Union Facility Time.

- 5.14 Keith Smith (KS) and Tim Wasdell (TW) attended the meeting and presented the case for schools to de-delegate funding to support union facility time. TW and KS produced paper presentations of their activities supporting T&W schools. TW had written a letter to Forum members and this can be found at the following link:

Insert link when approved by ICT.

- 5.15 KS said that he had contacted the Community Academies Trust (CAT), the sponsor of Telford Priory, Telford Langley and Telford Park schools and they were willing to contribute towards facility time activities as were some other secondary schools.
- 5.16 JC stated that there was a need to take the decision to secondary heads' forum for them to decide as a body if they wanted to join in the scheme. CD said that he would take this forward and report back to the Forum.
- 5.17 CL stated that she was disappointed that the data on union facility time had not been made available early enough for clusters to have a discussion regarding union facility time de-delegation.
- 5.18 MB pointed out that agreements with unions are collective agreements which need union representatives.

- 5.19 CL stated that she was not convinced that de-delegation is the best way of providing the service; we don't know if the monies spent have been correctly accounted for.
- 5.20 TD stated that de-delegation ensures that all schools within a particular sector contribute rather than just some buying in and therefore provides clarity as to who is entitled to benefit from the service and schools for which work should not be completed without being charged.
- 5.21 CL asked if this could be a buy in service. KS stated that the ability for schools not to buy in would mean that it is likely that the service would then suffer.
- 5.22 RG asked if the unions contribute to union facility time as presumably all the members that are being supported pay a subscription into the unions. If members are paying their own fees why are schools being asked to pay for their employees receiving support from the union, which in some cases is against the school? TW stated that unions have not got the funds to cover local union facility time. Member subscriptions pay for regional representation, which only takes place once cases reach a higher level.
- 5.23 KS stated that T&W is known for its good relationships with the unions.
- 5.24 JC stated that T&W could not provide a union service as there may be a conflict of interest as T&W is in some cases the employer of school staff.
- 5.25 PR asked if a tiered service could be provided with schools buying in for a basic service and then paying for specific cases past a certain point.
- 5.26 CL highlighted that the union facility time work could only be funded for work done in the school day where staff had to be engaged to backfill the union facility representative. So far there has been no data provided which shows how many days have been spent in accordance with these requirements.
- 5.27 MG stated that union facility time representatives have days allocated to provide support but are not necessarily going out to schools to perform these duties. Where is the money going that is funding these days?
- 5.28 MB stated that the current system is not ideal but alternatives are unrealistic.
- 5.29 JC stated that union meetings do not seem to take place in the school working day.
- 5.30 SB said that this issue needs to be taken back to clusters.
- 5.31 TD pointed out that if this is not voted through then schools will need to document any methodology that they intend to put in place as an alternative to de-delegation.
- 5.32 MB stated that the method devised by Michael Gove, previous Education Secretary, was designed to reduce the power of the unions.

5.33 JC asked if we could vote that we de-delegate and then decide how this will be allocated?

5.34 CL stated that the allocation should be distributed based upon activities completed and then asked where the figure of £55K came from. AW stated that the first de-delegation was based upon the prior year allocations for union facility time, divided by the NOR for all pupils in T&W and this amount per pupil has been carried forward.

5.35 SB stated that we need to collect information from union representatives of eligible work done before we can approve de-delegation.

5.36 The Forum deferred a vote to a later extraordinary meeting at which union representatives would have the opportunity to present the data required.

6. Growth & KS1 contingency allocations – TD.

6.1 This was covered in an earlier agenda items.

7. Any other business - TD.

7.1 JC advised the Forum that there was a post 16 review underway and that he would update the Forum as and when the results are available.

8. Future meetings - AW.

8.1 Future meetings dates and venues are as follows:

Friday 8th January 2016 9.30 am, Walker Room, Meeting Point House (extraordinary meeting)

Friday 22nd January 2016 9.30 am, Walker Room, Meeting Point House

Friday 18th March 2016, venue tbc

Friday 20th May 2016, venue tbc

8.2 Details are also available at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/507/forum_meetings